

10/20/82

D.E. NOTES---"MADMEN'S BLUFF"

Related titles:

- "The Game of Madmen's Bluff"
- "The Political Uses of Madness"
- "The Madmen Theory"

Kissenger called this "the strategy of ambiguity."

When using this theory the government confronts a "two-audience problem." How to make a credible threat to the U.S.S.R. while not scaring Americans or inciting them to oppose you.

One can appear mad by seeming to be out of control either of (1) one's self or ⁽²⁾ events.

When people learn about first use threats by the U.S., they want to believe these are mere bluffs, not serious threats. But it is mad even to bluff, particularly with present levels of force. Many wars have started with bluffs.

WWI forces were propelled into war by trying to mobilize first rather than face probable defeat by their mobilized opponent. When war seemed likely, pressure was strong to mobilize. The mobilization of one side confirmed the worst fears of the other, who immediately mobilized to avoid certain defeat.... The U.S. did not have to mobilize quickly because its oceans protected it. K/T

One likely route to nuclear war: using "small" nuclear weapons against countries allied with nuclear powers but without weapons themselves.

Another likely route: pressure to carry out a preemptive strike. This has been called "striking second first"---getting the other side before they get us, which they presumably will do next hour, or tomorrow, or next week.

When one side gains a preemptive ability, the security of the other side seems to compel requiring a similar ability.

On the face of it it seems implausible that either side could think the other would strike first, with the sure counterblow it would draw. However, within the defense-establishment, it can appear preferable than being left to striking second.

If the choice were either to strike first or make the peace, the choice would be clear. But an apparent choice either of striking first or being struck first would not be as clear. This is the strain of "logic" which might well govern nuclear decision-making in a crisis.

One view: if the other side gets a credible first strike ability, our first priority should be never to give them a basis to believe they are about to be struck first. Beefing up a first strike ability of our own greatly reduces our security.

Merely imitating a first strike ability is the most dangerous of all courses. It makes a nuclear exchange more likely, because it creates a false belief that you might come out better by using it.

A strong first strike force could seem worth using even if the other side wasn't about to strike first. It could look preferable to losing a non-nuclear war or losing "vital interests."

The Soviets cannot obtain a strong first strike capability, but they can attain some sort of first strike ability.

For a war to start, pre-emption doesn't actually have to be better than non-pre-emption. It only has to appear better at the moment than the prospect of being struck second. It could seem, at the moment, preferable to face 3,000 submarines alone than 3,000 submarines + Minutemen. Avenues to avoiding the ^{ex}change might be neglected in a charged climate where a Soviet first strike is made to seem imminent.

If the Russians struck first, they could get our communication, command and control. We wouldn't be able to tell our missiles to stop. If contact is lost, they are to be shot off.

"Ideologically blind" can mean the same as "mad."

Re the START proposals:

If we have fewer weapons but a greater percentage of first strike weapons within the remaining arsenals, the dangers are much greater. If the other side has fewer weapons, it is much more tempting to "pre-empt."

The most dangerous of all worlds is one with a high percentage of vulnerable first strike weapons on each side. Reagan's START proposals move us in this direction.

"Arms reductions" can actually be militarily desired steps--e.g. getting rid of the Polaris saves \$ and trouble.

It has not up to this point seemed feasible to threaten a pre-emptive strike. BUT if you develop a strong first strike ability, you can say to the other side, "Don't let this conflict get too big, or one or the other of us might find ourselves in the position of being strongly pressured to go first. If this gets started, it is not likely to stop." It is like two sides tugging on a knot in a tug-of-war, trying to untie it. R Oct-26, 1962

It is not necessary to believe you will come out well if you try a pre-emptive strike. You must only believe you would come out better.

~~This places immense risks in~~

Using the threat of a preemptive strike in a "conventional conflict" to control its outcome is like: pouring gasoline down the aisles of a movie theater, to help enforce the "No Smoking" sign.

When a non-nuclearized nation, with non-aggressive posture, mobilizes a civil defense effort, it is not a menacing gesture. But when a country with a credible first strike weapons places emphasis on civil defense, it is an ominous signal.

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Similarly, a draft would be a different sort of issue were we not an imperialistic, nuclear-threatening country. The draft supports these stances.

The START proposals have brought short-term political gains for the Reagan administration. But the long term costs pile up. The concentration on numbers plays right into his hands, allowing the development of first strike weapons. "This gives the Russians ~~an~~ reason to forgo their menacing SS-18's." False! Why would the Soviets be pushed toward "less vulnerable" submarine weapons which are actually just as vulnerable as their land-based missiles (because they don't have overseas bases, as we do. We have a strong anti-submarine capability. Their technology is way behind ours. They are just now trying to MIRV their subs.)

The Soviets don't load their subs with weapons. They don't trust them (likely communication difficulties,....)

START calls for a reduction of unspecified "land-based ICBM's." We are proposing a formula that allows us to have the MX, and does not prevent them from developing a first strike capability. We don't offer anything such as a route to forgoing our own first strike weapons ("you get rid of the SS-18 and we'll get rid of the MX.) Our strategy has been: rather than to deny them something we'd then have to deny ourselves, let's both be able to have it. This has characterized "arms control" efforts. It is worse than nothing. It has legitimized arms race increases. A joint agreement to fool each other's publics.